After 18 years of sitting idle, the former Chicago & North-western rail line between Madison and Evansville, Wis. is now active again. The first freight train since 1996 was seen chugging down the tracks on Monday, September 29, 2014 after a ribbon cutting ceremony recognized the special occasion.

The line now serves a brand new modernized concrete ready-mix plant in Oregon Wis., which serves the residential and commercial construction industries throughout Southern Wisconsin. The new ready-mix plant will be served three days per week seasonally as part of WSOR’s service plan based out of Madison.

The occasion was marked with a press conference at the West Clayton Road crossing in the City of Fitchburg, followed by an official ribbon cutting. Amongst the 200 plus in attendance were special guests Mayor Shawn Pfaff of the City of Fitchburg, Railroad Commissioner Jeff Plale and Secretary Mark Gottlieb of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. After speeches were made by our special guests, the ribbon was cut and the awaiting train began pulling the first 22 loads of sand into Oregon.

Thanks to the City of Fitchburg, Village of Oregon, the State of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin River Rail Transit Commission, this 15 mile line is once again connected to the nation’s freight railroad system.
Continuing a program that has been in existence for over 50 years, Lutheran Churches (more specifically, ladies from those churches) from across Southern Wisconsin and Northern Illinois made quilts, layettes and boxes of soap which were delivered to the Wisconsin Southern (WSOR) Rail Yard on Madison’s East side on October 4, 2104. The Madison Area Lutheran Council (MALC) coordinates the local effort for Lutheran World Relief (LWR). This year, about 35 volunteers, including many youth from area churches, loaded nearly 3,000 cases of quilts, layettes, school kits and boxes of soap. Donations came from over 91 individual churches. In total, over 60,000 pounds of goods were loaded and shipped on two WSOR rail cars. The churches are scattered throughout Southern Wisconsin from Walworth to the Mississippi River and Baraboo, the Illinois state line.

The supplies travel from Madison to Baltimore, Maryland where they are temporarily warehoused at a Lutheran World Relief facility until needed in emergency situations in countries around the world, including: Afghanistan, Armenia, Cameroon, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Philippines, Serbia, Tanzania, and Yemen.

WSOR staff was involved in the planning process from the outset ensuring a loading process with paramount emphasis on safety of the loading crews and a smooth and efficient operation. Company personnel were present throughout the morning serving as safety observers and technical advisors. Bob Topel, the coordinator for MALC stated: “This annual event highlights how much good can be accomplished by the partnership of dedicated volunteers such as the ladies that hand made these quilts and committed corporate citizens like the Wisconsin Southern Railroad” Plans are already in the works for the next “Ingathering” of quilts and supplies on October 10, 2015.

WSOR is pleased to announce that Andy Laurent has accepted the position of Regional Vice President Marketing and Sales – Wisconsin & Southern Railroad (WSOR). In this role, Andy will be responsible for overall performance of the WSOR as it relates to cultivating growth and leading the expansion of our existing commercial and Customer relationships. Andy will work with and lead the WSOR Marketing Team to maximize revenues and volume growth initiatives. In addition, he will be partnering with Watco Commercial, Operating, and Support Services Teams in an ongoing effort to meet and exceed Customer expectations in accordance with our Customer First Foundation Principles.

Most recently, Andy served as Director – Marketing & Sales at the Chicago South Shore and South Bend Railroad headquartered in Michigan City, Indiana, where he led the commercial efforts of that short line railroad. He brings to WSOR an abundance of knowledge pertaining to interline settlement, navigation throughout the Chicago gateway railroad environment, economic development, and management of complex freight and passenger rail relationships.

Andy’s family is from the Green Bay, Wisconsin, area. He grew up in South Bend, Indiana, and received a bachelor’s degree in urban planning and development from Ball State University.
SAFETY SPOTLIGHT:

Winter Weather Preparedness

Winter months increase the potential risk of derailments on private sidings. In most cases these derailments are caused by the accumulation of snow and ice on and around the tracks.

WSOR will be responsible to keep our main line switches operable during the winter months. There may be times when we have a “major” storm blow through and service may be altered until our MOW crews can clear out the obstructions. Our Customer Service Department will keep you advised as to any operational modifications as they may develop on a case by case basis.

On private or leased track it is our Customer’s responsibility to keep all flange-ways along the rail, switches, private crossings and derail free and clear of ice, snow or any other hazard that may impede our service to you. This would include a cleared pathway along both sides of the track. We would recommend that a daily inspection of the track be monitored in order to assure safe delivery. It is essential that this action be taken around the clock as many of our scheduled deliveries happen during 2nd and 3rd shifts across the entire WSOR system.

CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT:

Quad/Graphics

Quad/Graphics is a global provider of print and related multichannel solutions for magazines, special interest publications, catalogs, retail ad inserts, direct mail, books, directories, and commercial and specialty products, including in-store marketing materials. Quad/Graphics’ clients include marketers and retailers like Lands’ End, JCPenney, L.L.Bean, Dicks’ Sporting Goods and Cabela’s; and publishers like Time Inc., National Geographic Society, Rodale, Simon & Schuster and Random House.

Founded in Pewaukee, Wis., in 1971 in a vacant millwork factory with a single printing press, today the company is the United States’ largest printer of magazines and catalogs, and a leading printer of retail ad inserts for newspapers with approximately 19,000 employees working from 59 plants and other support locations in the United States. The company is also the largest printer in Latin America, with a presence in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Peru; and a leading printer in Europe, with two modern plants in Poland. In addition to printing, Quad/Graphics offers services such as media planning, design, photography, videography, imaging, paper procurement, ink formulation, data optimization, list management, workflow solutions, and multichannel strategy and deployment for digital, mobile and online media.

In Wisconsin, Quad/Graphics employs more than 6,000 people, including more than 2,000 in Sussex, home of its corporate headquarters. Also based in Sussex are QuadTech, its research and development subsidiary, and QuadMed, a nationally recognized provider of onsite, near site and shared site employer-sponsored health and wellness solutions. In addition to the Sussex headquarters plant, the company operates printing facilities in Burlington, Franklin, Hartford, Lomira, Menomonee Falls, Pewaukee and West Allis. Temp In-Store Productions, a Quad/Graphics company based in New Berlin, provides in-store marketing materials and programs for many of the nation’s leading retailers and brand marketers. WSOR is proud to serve their Hartford facilities.

In recent years Quad/Graphics has significantly altered the print-industry landscape with the acquisitions of Montréal-based printer Worldcolor in 2010, Transcontinental Printing’s Mexican printing network in 2011, Baltimore-based Vertis in 2013, and Minnesota-based Brown Printing Company in early 2014. As part of the Worldcolor transaction, Quad/Graphics became a publicly traded company with class A common stock listed on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol QUAD, starting on July 6, 2010.
CELEBRATING THE WSOR

WSOR’s Annual Holiday Party was held on December 14, 2014. Rick Baden, President of Watco Companies, joined the team and celebrated with brunch and a gift raffle at the Crowne Plaza hotel in Madison.

The team at the WSOR also participated in a 50/50 raffle to raise money for the UW Children’s Hospital through the UW Foundation and the Greatest Need Project. Together with Watco, the WSOR team donated $2,300 and raffled off $1,000 to two Team Members.

The winners of the 50/50 raffle were Justin Hays ($800 winner) and Richard Knilans ($200 winner). Justin used his winnings to purchase Christmas gifts for a family in need in his community.

We want to hear from you!
Please let us know what you want to see every quarter. Email any suggestions and ideas you have to Katie Sackett at ksackett@watcocompanies.com.

Contributions by: Ken Lucht, Brad Peot, Becky Beaudry, Bob Topel

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